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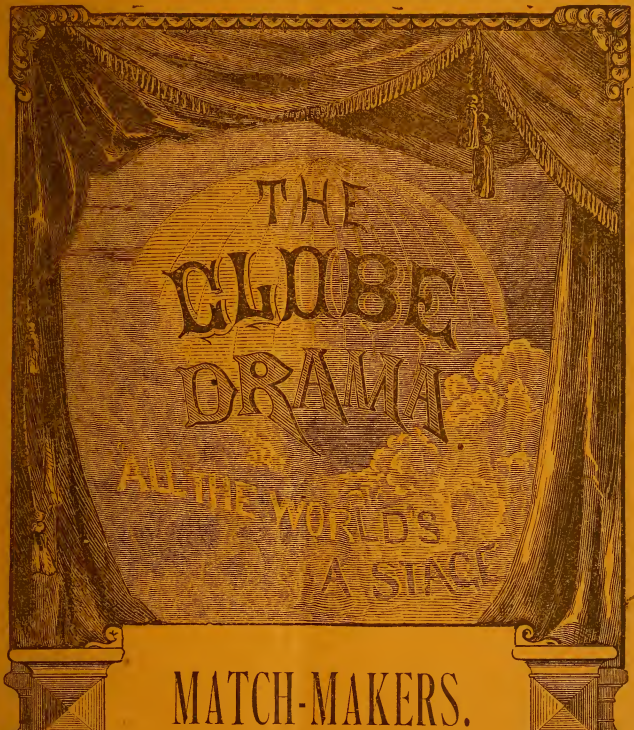

MATCH-MAKERS.

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MATCHMAKERS

A Comedy in One Act

By A. E.

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BOSTON
GEORGE M. BAKER AND COMPANY
1884

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CHARACTERS.

Mr. F. HARRINGTON COURTENAY, a banker.

Mr. AARON FITHWORTH, a young man with a hobby.

Mrs. EVANGELINE RODNEY, a designing widow.

Miss HENRIETTA WHITE, Mrs. Rodney's niece.

PROPERTIES.

Two chairs, a table, a screen, a newspaper, a mirror; two or three books, paper-knife, vase, chatelaine, inkstand, postage-stamps, on the table.

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MATCHMAKERS.

SCENE.

MR. COURTENAY *discovered seated in an arm-chair, attempting to read a newspaper. While speaking, he rises, walks about impatiently, seats himself, and rises again.*

MR. C. It's no use! It's got to be done — confound it! It's the most infernal bundle of complications a man ever had to deal with! See my way clear? A June-bug might as well see his way clear through a paper of pins! The more I try to straighten it out, the worse it gets. Attempt straightforward courses with a parcel of women? That's out of the question, of course. And when you've said a parcel of women, you've said a good deal; but you haven't said it all, this time. There are parcels and parcels, — and this is a most particular parcel of most particular women! Mrs. Evangeline Rodney — now, what can an ordinary man do with her? But what do I want to do with her? Hanged if I know. There it is again! I thought I knew that I wanted to marry her, when I came to stay at this confounded place, knowing I should meet her; but between concealing my feelings here, and showing them there, I don't know which *is* my feelings. Now, I don't know whether that's grammar — is my feelings, are my feelings — I don't know any thing. If I stay here any longer, I shan't know how to spell. I'm gray already. Now, let us be reasonable. Mrs. Rodney will come in in a minute, and I must get my cue again. Proposition first: I wish to marry Mrs. Rodney. Yes, I certainly do: I do not think there is any reasonable doubt of that. Why don't I marry Mrs. Rodney? Because Mrs. Rodney won't marry me. That is not exactly encour-

aging, but it is lucid. Why won't Mrs. Rodney marry me? She may not after, but she certainly won't before, I ask her. Why haven't I asked her? Here arise the complications. Because, according to Marian Ramsay, who is responsible for our acquaintance, Mrs. Rodney cannot be induced to think of marriage for herself until her niece, Miss Henrietta White, is settled in life, — shall have made a good match, in short. Just the last thing before I left her house, Marian Ramsay said, "If you fall in love with Evangeline, as I know you will, don't tell her so until after her niece is married, or at least engaged. She will not listen to you, and you will have ruined your cause." Well, I was not in love with her then, and did not pay very strict attention to the words. Things are changed now: war is declared, and my marching orders are important. "Do not tell her so until after her niece is engaged: it will ruin your cause." So far my course is plain. But my course cannot be limited to staying where I am for an indefinite period. Therefore, Miss White must become engaged. Further complications: Miss White is a peculiar young lady. If she thinks other people want her to make a good match, she will make none, — or a very unfortunate one. If she thinks other people wish her to remain single, she will marry to-morrow, — confound her perversity! Now, what is the plain course for a plain man to pursue, that he may speedily realize Proposition I., — marry Mrs. Rodney? My hair is not only turning gray, it is falling out. Some simpletons would say it made matters easier to have a lover for Miss Henrietta right at hand, — my nephew Aaron. That shows they don't know *her*. If he was on the coast of Africa, and unable to get home, there would be some hope. Here comes Mrs. Rodney! If I stay now, I shall certainly make a mess of it. I must have time to think it over. I shall probably make a mess of it any way, but there's something in delaying even messes. Procrastination is the thief of time. (*Exit* L.)

(*Enter* MRS. EVANGELINE RODNEY R.)

MRS. R. (*coming down*). He positively ran away! Afraid, evidently. (*Laughing.*) How absurd of him! As if I could run away with him whether he would or no! Dear Marian was right: I have found him charming. But, if she had not

added that provoking little postscript to her letter, I should not think any thing more about him. Here it is, way at the end. (*Seating herself.*) "I'm so glad I had the pleasure of introducing Mr. Courtenay! I know you will find him charming; and I know you will think his nephew just the man for the attractive, but perverse, Henrietta. It is very good of me to favor your matchmaking proclivities, for I don't approve of them at all." And yet she used to say she should make mine: Marian is changed in more ways than one. "*I* would not *dare* make a match. Still, Mr. Fithworth is an exceptional character. His connection with Mr. Courtenay will be invaluable to him business-wise, George says. As for Mr. Courtenay himself, I know, my dear Eve, you will try to flirt with him." Very unkind and unjust in Marian to say so! Just as if I could think of such things. (*Sighs, then brightens up, and goes on reading.*) "But even in the country, with time hanging heavily on his hands, and even, even, Evangeline, with *you* near him, he will not fall in love. He is too afraid of losing his bachelor liberty. He is not a woman-hater, he is worse: he is a woman-tolerator." So there is Mr. Courtenay's "character" for him, safe in my pocket. (*Rises, and walks carelessly up to mirror, and glances in.*) It is a very provoking, and, yes, a very fascinating description. I wonder if I tried *very* hard — But there are other things that must be done first (*enthusiastically*). How little he knows into what dangerous places his lines have fallen! Afraid of losing his bachelor liberty, and walking straight into the toils of a designing widow! I always used to think it would be nice to be a designing widow. Of course I don't mean *that*, for of course it is very, *very* sad to be a widow; but the designing part. And designing young girls are not nice, so I should have to be a widow. (*Sits, quite relieved.*) Now the sapper and miner are at work. Let me reconsider my plans. Henrietta really must be settled in life. To be sure, she is young yet, but she is *such* a responsibility; and the longer it is put off, the harder she will be to influence. Then, afterwards I can think of — of other things. Now Mr. Aaron Fithworth seems to me to be just the man for her husband. Marian was right. Of course I do not wish to do any thing unwise, but this young man seems really

designated by Providence. Mr. Courtenay says he was so much impressed by her when he met her last winter. He spoke of it quite in confidence, and seemed so pleased that I agreed with him that it might be a good arrangement if an engagement should result from this meeting. I must see him, and together we will develop our little plot. (*Rises.*) My part of the affair is none too simple a one, — to induce Henrietta to look upon him favorably. If she thinks I want her to marry him, she will not. If she thinks he wants her to marry him, ten to one she will not. This, then, is my problem: To make an ardent lover and approving relatives draw a young lady into matrimony while she thinks the lover indifferent and the guardians unwilling. It is really lovely to be so designing! Why does not Mr. Courtenay come? I must be very distant, or he will suspect me of designs.

(*Enter* MR. COURTENAY L.)

MR. C. Ah, madam! I beg your pardon for any delay; but I was called away after coming here to meet you, some moments ago.

MRS. R. You are perfectly excusable, Mr. Courtenay. I wished to see you, you know, upon matters relating to my niece Henrietta. You tell me that your nephew is anxious to pay his addresses to my niece?

MR. C. Most anxious, madam. I expect him to plead his cause in person this afternoon. (*Aside.*) Faith, if he isn't too anxious, it will fare the better with him with Miss Henrietta!

MRS. R. You conscientiously recommend him to me as a most desirable husband —

MR. C. (*quickly*). Indeed, madam, no! There is another applicant —

MRS. R. For my niece's hand?

MR. C. No, no. You were speaking of your niece. Pardon me. (*Aside.*) Confound it! I knew I should put my foot in it. She will have an inkling of my plans before it is time.

MRS. R. Yes, of my niece, certainly. (*Aside.*) Did he think I was about to appropriate his nephew myself? How suspicious he is! But then I *am* designing.

MR. C. I wished to ask you if you would advise Aaron to adopt the — the measures usually affected by young men under similar —

MRS. R. Certainly not.

MR. C. Something a little different?

MRS. R. Something decidedly different. (*Laughing.*) I see, my dear Mr. Courtenay, that you have fathomed my niece's character.

MR. C. Heaven forbid!

MRS. R. That you have perceived her only too evident wilfulness, the perversity that lies at the root of her nature. Henrietta is an exceptional character, and must be treated exceptionally.

MR. C. (*rises*). Certainly. Couldn't we except her altogether, and pass on?

MRS. R. Mr. Courtenay!

MR. C. Forgive me, Mrs. Rodney. I spoke most thoughtlessly. The interests of my nephew are as dear to me as are those of your niece to you, and they seem to me to be identified. What course would you suggest?

MRS. R. In the first place, Henrietta must not at first imagine that your nephew is interested in her. From the moment she suspects that, all is lost.

MR. C. (*walks* R., *a little bewildered*). Certainly she must not, certainly not. That is evident at a glance.

MRS. R. Your nephew must be discreet, — must cloak his affection under a semblance of indifference.

MR. C. (*aside*). He'll find that only too easy, I'm afraid.

MRS. R. Then all will go well, I am sure. We must not forget to avoid all eulogy, indeed all *expressed* approval. Let us lead Henrietta to suppose that we are entirely uninterested.

MR. C. (*aside*). Lead Henrietta! That is the hardest thing she has given me to do yet. I'd rather lead a soft-shelled crab! (*Aloud.*) I am at your service, madam. I shall do my best to observe your instructions, and will answer for my nephew. Afterwards (*indifferently*) might I ask, if this matter reaches a satisfactory conclusion —

MRS. R. (*quickly*). Oh, afterwards! I shall stay in the country for a long, an indefinite period. I shall then have time and liberty for several cherished projects —

MR. C. (*aside*). She must not suspect any ulterior motive. Ah, indeed! Matrimony —

MRS. R. (*quickly*). Is the farthest possible subject from my thoughts, — except for Henrietta. (*Aside.*) That should put him off his guard.

MR. C. So I hoped. (*Aside.*) Confound it! That's not what I meant to say!

MRS. R. (*aside*). He need not have alluded to his fears so broadly.

MR. C. I mean that I imagined — naturally, Henrietta — after she was disposed of — I mean after her future was happily secured — but we can't always tell about these things. (*Aside.*) Good heavens! What an ass I am!

MRS. R. No, but I hope all will be for the best.

MR. C. (*fervently*). So do I. There! Some one has come! It must be my nephew. I will go and interview him immediately. (*Aside.*) Any thing to get out of this.

MRS. R. Do so, and explain to him any apparent coolness on my part. (*Exit* MR. C. L.) (*Rises, comes down.*) Oh dear, this is charming! I can hardly keep all my designs in my head. Let me see. To make Henrietta think Mr. Fitzworth is not in love with her. To make her think I disapprove his suit. To make him think that things are all right. To lead them into falling in love with each other. To lull Mr. Courtenay into a state of perfect security where he is concerned. I think I can do it all: now I must find Henrietta. (*Exit* R.)

(MRS. R. *re-enters with* HENRIETTA. HENRIETTA *has just returned from driving, wears hat and gloves.* MRS. R. *appears anxious,* HENRIETTA *impatient.*)

MRS. R. But, my dear Henrietta —

HENRIETTA. *Please* don't call me dear Henrietta!

MRS. R. But, my dear child —

HENRIETTA. *Please* don't call me your dear child!

MRS. R. Henrietta, you are impertinent.

HENRIETTA. I beg your pardon. But, aunt Eve, how can I help it?

MRS. R. What have I done, Henrietta, that you should not be able to help it? I am willing to make every allowance, but why the suggestion that you should entertain a young man during the afternoon —

HENRIETTA (*walking up and down*). You know very well, aunt Eve, that you are dragging me up to a young man, and that's not so bad either, as the way your dragging him up to me; and you have — have — have — well, you've just dragged us!

MRS. R. Pray don't, Henrietta! I should think you were ponds! And you make me shiver, thinking of drowning and such things. I am sure, in your soberer moments —

HENRIETTA (*sits* L.). I shall *never* have any soberer moments!

MRS. R. You will wonder at your own impetuosity. The idea of my dragging a young man to you! I have never thought of such a thing, — never. (*Gently.*) I have sufficient confidence in my niece's attractions, to feel that violent measures in that direction are as unnecessary as they are undesirable. This particular young man, moreover, is absorbed in a hobby, — railroads, — which, according to his uncle, monopolizes most of his time; and I should never dream of suggesting that you should interfere with his pursuits. I should, indeed, be very sorry to have you trifle with him.

HENRIETTA (*a little softened*). That is all very well. But you know, aunt Eve, that you, or that managing old Mr. Courtenay —

MRS. R. (*offended, rises*). Henrietta, I cannot allow you to speak in this way of an esteemed friend. In point of fact, Mr. Courtenay is *not* an old man, and he is much younger, even, than his years. Also, while I do not understand precisely your use of the word, I can confidently assert that he is *not* "managing." (*Aside.*) At least, not too managing, scarcely managing enough.

HENRIETTA (*impatiently, rising*). Well, then, this — esteemed friend — has brought his nephew up into this part of the country to — to *marry* me. You know he has!

MRS. R (*starting*). To marry you, Henrietta! What do you mean? Is there any thing very surprising in the fact that a gentleman like Mr. Courtenay should wish his nephew to visit the same house? A young man who, I will say, in spite of your absurd remarks, is a most estimable, intellectual and refined young man, and one whom any girl might be proud to marry, — any girl —

HENRIETTA (*pouting*). I am not any girl — any girl, at all.

MRS. R. (*sighing*). I am conscious of your peculiarities; and I do not say that this young man is at all fitted for you, — not at *all*. (*Pauses impressively.*) But is there any thing so phenomenal in the circumstances, that you should be led to fancy you are to be forced into matrimony?

HENRIETTA. Oh, no! It would take a good many very phenomenal circumstances to force me into matrimony,— very phenomenal indeed!

MRS. R. (*sits* R.). The circumstances may be most favorable to love-making, I allow. A house in the country, two attractive, undeniably attractive, young people, and plenty of leisure: still (*satirically*), these circumstances are sometimes unavoidable.

HENRIETTA (*rather impressed*). But why do you want to send me to talk to him before I have been half an hour in the house?

MRS. R. He has asked for you; and, my dear child, would it not be polite, not to say kind, to help to entertain a friend's guest, who has nothing to do?

HENRIETTA. Why doesn't he go and talk to his uncle? That is what he came up for, according to accounts. (*Sits* L.)

MRS. R. (*a little embarrassed*). His uncle? Why — well (*archly*) — I want his uncle to talk to me, my dear. Don't blame your aunt for wishing to be entertained too. (*Aside.*) There was diplomacy!

HENRIETTA. I have never met him but once. I am naturally very shy.

MRS. R. (*laughing*). Go and take your hat off, and give your shyness time to wear off. Come back here, and renew your acquaintance. That is a dear child! His uncle shall re-introduce you, if necessary. I will go, and let him know that you have arrived. (*Exit* L.)

HENRIETTA (*rises, comes down*). It seem to me that there is about this matter a good deal of — red-tape. Why doesn't aunt Evangeline leave the matter to accident? Why must she go and tell Mr. Courtenay that I am here, and find out if Mr. Fithworth is here, and tell Mr. Courtenay to tell him that I am here, and every thing? Mr. Courtenay does not seem to me one of those men who are positively dependent upon the presence of their younger relatives for mental support, but he doesn't seem able to live without Mr. Fithworth another minute; yet, when this affectionate and clinging nephew reaches his equally affectionate and clinging uncle, he is turned over to me for entertainment. I must be polite, however, or aunt Evangeline will scold me; and it bores one so to be scolded! If I should be actively

disagreeable, the young man might leave too; and then, I suppose, Mr. Courtenay would waste away before our very eyes. That would be so sad, and family affection is so beautiful! No, I will disarm suspicion. I will deceive them all. I will think he is perfectly splendid. I will be hopelessly smitten. He shall be all my fancy painted him. Then they will let me alone, and I can easily arrange matters with him. I hope he will not receive instructions to be too ardent. The last eligible young man was very tiresome. Meanwhile, I will go and prepare. Let him look to it! (*Exit* R.)

(*Enter* MR. FITHWORTH L., *who walks nervously up and down the room. Takes up, and lays down, things.*)

MR. F. Good gracious! I don't see how I'm to get out of it. I must have the money: nobody has it but uncle Courtenay. I can't get it, unless he marries the widow; can't marry the widow, unless I marry the niece! Was there ever such a circle of perplexities drawn round a man! (*Pauses, and goes on meditatively.*) Speaking of circles, I wonder if curving around that obstruction wouldn't be better than blowing it up. (*Recommences his nervous walk.*) But, good gracious! can't blow it up, unless I have the powder; can't have the powder, unless I have the money; can't have the money, except from uncle Harrington; can't— Oh, good gracious! there I am again! Suppose Miss White comes into the room before uncle Harrington: what should I do? I haven't the least idea what to say to her. Uncle Harrington wrote that I was much impressed when I met her last winter. Daresay I was. Don't remember it now,—no time for such things. That railway *must* be carried through to Mill's Station. There's lots of money in it, when it's once started. *Board of directors all chosen. (*Rises, comes down.)* What's that? Thought I heard someone coming. If I only could make uncle Harrington interested in this railway, he wouldn't care so much about the widow; but he never did care any thing for railways. Well, tastes differ. I never cared any thing for widows. Good gracious! there is somebody. Oh, it's uncle!

(*Enter* MR. COURTENAY R., *shakes hands with* AARON.)

MR. C. (*with forced facetiousness*). So you have come. I thought you seemed pretty impatient. Considering your

slight acquaintance with the young lady, you're a good deal interested.

MR. F. (*absently*). I am immensely. So are Brown and Davis to the extent of —

MR. C. Rivals, eh? I hadn't heard of that. Well, you will have to despatch matters. Does Mrs. Rodney know any thing about this — Brown or Davis?

AARON (*walks* R., *weakly*). No, sir, not — not unless you've told her. (*Aside*). I knew I should make some blunder. He *knows* I'm interested in railways.

MR. C. (*walks* L.). I shan't mention it. You'll see the young lady herself presently, and make the best of your time.

AARON. I will. But do you think that she is the kind of young lady that will take to me? (*Perceptibly brightening.*) They don't sometimes.

MR. C. (*walks* R.). She will (*impressively*) if you take the right track. It's that I wished to see you about.

AARON (*with conviction*). I am sure I have, uncle Harrington.

MR. C. (*indulgently*). And how does it lie? What's your idea of it? (*Sits* R.)

AARON (*sits*). It runs on the left-hand side, and goes by the old canal. That brings it up on the mound above, — quite a steep grade, but —

MR. C. (*severely*). You will find it a steeper grade than you have any idea of, young man, if you treat the matter in this fashion. What do you mean, with your impertinence about mounds and canals?

MR. F. (*sadly, with his hand to his head*). I only thought —

MR. C. Stop thinking then, by all means! You may not find it very difficult. Now listen to me. Miss Henrietta White, though a most charming young lady, and precisely adapted to make you of all men happy, is a little perverse. So, if you act the ardent lover, she may give you your *congé* without further parley: therefore cultivate an indifferent manner —

AARON. Yes, certainly; nothing easier — to cultivate, I mean.

MR. C. (*rises*). However, never relax your efforts to be

agreeable. Win her — her — well, her affections, and so attain your object.

AARON (*warmly, rises*). Yes, and indeed I consider it an object worthy of every effort. Not only for the practical advantages resulting to myself personally, but it seems to me to be a scheme of philanthropy well suited to my nature —

MR. C. (*aside*). Well, I like that!

AARON. The promised fare is within the reach of the poorest artisan, and the industrious mechanic —

MR. C. Hold hard! The promised fair *isn't*, I say! And you'd better not let her hear you say so, either! I like your impudence!

AARON. Impudence!

MR. C. (*walks up and down*). Yes, impudence! She's not to be had for the asking by anybody, and poor artisans and industrious mechanics are not in her line.

AARON (*bewildered, but rousing himself at the last words*). I beg your pardon, uncle; I don't exactly understand you, but you're mistaken about the line. It runs directly through the smaller manufacturing towns —

MR. C. (*thundering*). And I tell you you're an idiot! She never ran through a small manufacturing town in her life! Her aunt wouldn't let her!

AARON. Her aunt! (*Aside.*) Oh, I see! I *am* an idiot.

MR. C. (*still angry*). If, after you have married her, you let her make that sort of a spectacle of herself, I can't say any thing; but she is at present in charge of a lady of sound common-sense, and, though she herself may be a little flighty, she's not insane.

AARON (*meekly*). I have the highest opinion possible of her and of her aunt, I assure you. I'll do my best to win her — her affections, as you suggested. (*Nervously.*) Will she be here soon?

MR. C. She is driving, I think; but her aunt expects her every minute. Have you seen Mrs. Rodney, Aaron?

AARON (*absently*). No, I haven't seen anybody. Is she as attractive as her niece?

MR. C. Worth ten of her, Aaron. One is a mature, accomplished woman of the world; the other, a sample of crude young womanhood. (*Quickly.*) But an excellent wife for you, Aaron, excellent. By the way, how's that railway of yours coming on?

AARON. Very nicely. A little money is all that is needed.

MR. C. (*gayly*). And that we will see about on my wedding-day.

AARON. You wouldn't be likely to forget it?

MR. C. No, no, I won't forget it, Aaron. I shall be most uncommonly happy, I've no doubt, but I'll be a man of business to the last — to the last. On the day Mrs. Evangeline Rodney becomes my wife, you shall have what is necessary.

AARON. Without further conditions?

MR. C. (*significantly*). Without *further* conditions. (*A short pause*, AARON *plunged in thought.* MR. C. *watches him, then rises, and says gayly:*)

MR. C. When once that obstruction is removed, all things will go smoothly, no doubt.

AARON (*looks up quickly, rises*). Yes, sir; and you know I wrote you about removing that obstruction. What do you advise?

MR. C. (*impatiently*). I've been advising you this half-hour!

AARON (*meekly*). I wondered whether you would suggest blowing up, or —

MR. C. Blowing up! Good heavens! You're the most previous fellow I ever saw in my life. For Heaven's sake, don't blow her up yet awhile! I tell you she won't stand it. After the knot is tied, you can blow her up if you like — at your own expense! (*Exit* L.)

AARON (*sadly*). I am afraid there is some mistake; in fact, I think I must have misunderstood my uncle. His terms are sometimes very ambiguous. Of course, if I had had any idea he was speaking about Miss White, I should not have spoken as I did. I am not at all hasty or unkind with women, uncle Harrington ought to know that. (*Absently.*) I think if I could only give uncle Harrington a lively idea of my plan for the Moruckan, he would take more interest in it. I wonder if I couldn't arrange something to give him a kind of bird's-eye view. (*Walks* L. *to a table behind a screen, upon which are various little ornaments, sits, and says thoughtfully:*) This book can represent the mound, this paper-knife the track, this vase will do for the depot on the east side, and this — this (a chatelaine), *this* can be the

drawbridge. Now if— (*Enter* HENRIETTA R., AARON *does not see her.*)

HENRIETTA. They told me I should find him here. If there is any thing I cannot bear to do, it's to be sent to hold up my head like a lady, and talk pretty to strangers. (*Comes down.*) I *know* they expect him to make love to me. If he expects to himself, he may think better of it. I suppose he intends to dash into the business immediately, propose on the spot, overcome by the charm of my appearance and the multiplicity of my attractions! Carry the castle by storm, in fact. We shall see. The nearer he approaches the torrid zone, the farther I shall withdraw into the polar regions. An iceberg will appear a sunny play-ground compared to my demeanor. He shall —

AARON. This is the stream over which the bridge goes, on which the wagons can travel that carry the rails and other material to build the road through the ravine which leads to the other side of the river —

HENRIETTA (*who has been drawing gradually nearer on tiptoe, and now looks over the screen*). And this is the cow with the crumpled horn that tossed the dog that worried the cat that killed the rat that ate the malt that lived in the house that Jack built!

AARON. *Cow!* did you say?

HENRIETTA (*coolly*). I was trying to assist you. Your intentions are undoubtedly good; but your education has been neglected, and you did not say it right.

AARON (*rises*). My intentions? Did you mean —

HENRIETTA. I mean that I suppose that to be the house that Jack built. It's just about my idea of it. The crumpled horn is very good, but the cow is less conspicuous.

AARON (*bewildered*). I don't think I understand your allusions. I'm not conversant with that — literature.

HENRIETTA. What *is* it, then?

AARON. Which?

HENRIETTA. All those.

AARON. Different things.

HENRIETTA. Indeed!

AARON. This, Miss White, is a depot on the Moruckan Railway.

HENRIETTA (*sits*). Ah, is it?

AARON (*sits*). Not a large one.

HENRIETTA. So I should imagine.

AARON. A small one is all that will be needed at first.

HENRIETTA. Where are the sponge-cake and pop-corn balls?

AARON. Pop-corn balls?

HENRIETTA. Why, you are certainly not so unwise as to dream of having a depot without a refreshment-room!

AARON (*smiling indulgently*). That might be added later.

HENRIETTA. Not at all. Better add the depot, or even the railway, later. (*Moving things on table.*) Now, we will have this the sponge-cake with the fly-cover over it; and this is the soda-fountain with the sign promising vanilla, wild cherry, coffee, raspberry, strawberry, and so forth, and where they never have any thing but lemon, and the cream all gone.

AARON (*helplessly*). Just as you like.

HENRIETTA (*sweetly*). Oh, no, just as *you* like! Ginger, if you prefer.

AARON (*timidly*). Later it may be possible to make this place a centre —

HENRIETTA. Is it desirable to make it a centre?

AARON (*argumentatively*). Certainly. It seems to me that there can be no reasonable doubt that here is the most accessible point —

HENRIETTA. It's just as easy to have it the centre now. Just put that inkstand on the right, and leave the paper-cutter where it is, and there you have it!

AARON (*pityingly*). But, my dear young lady, that inkstand is a precipitous promontory.

HENRIETTA. Oh! (*Aside.*) I wonder if he is quite right in his mind.

AARON. And the paper-cutter cannot go *through* —

HENRIETTA. I thought that was what they were for, but it's no matter.

AARON. On account of this obstruction: so you see that is impossible.

HENRIETTA. Oh, certainly. Any child could see that. (*Aside.*) It's best to humor him, I suppose. (*Rises, comes down.*) He does not seem inclined to be oppressively ardent; and icebergs must be ordinary objects on his horizon, to

judge from the indifference with which he regards them. I am not sure that any caution on my part is necessary. I think I will try another tack. I suppose they would have told me if he had been really dangerous. (*Goes back, amiably.*) I don't think, Mr. Fithworth, that we quite understand each other. I thought it was some kind of a game, but it seems it isn't. Perhaps, if you won't think me too stupid, you will explain this to me.

AARON (*warmly*). I am sure you won't be stupid. (*Recollecting himself.*) But perhaps — uncle — or — perhaps we'd better talk about — other things. But I'm sure *I* should — I mean we both would — or, at least, you would — enjoy this more.

HENRIETTA. I know nothing else we should enjoy so much. What is this postage stamp? And *where* did you get my chatelaine?

AARON. It was lying here, and I used it for the drawbridge. That postage-stamp is nothing but a flag-station.

HENRIETTA. Is that all? But I think a flag-station would be much prettier here, don't you? It ought to be elevated, you know; and we can put it up on this book. Then the flag can wave so much more effectively o'er the land of the free.

AARON (*perplexed*). But there isn't any elevation there.

HENRIETTA. Oh, never you mind! We can have one just as easily as not. It would hardly be any trouble at all, and *so* much nicer for the postage-stamp — I mean the flag-station.

AARON (*gently*). It would be nicer, but it hardly seems to me practicable. All we really need is a switch —

HENRIETTA. A *switch!* Oh, I couldn't really. You can use my chatelaine as long as you like, but I couldn't take my hair down now. (*Aside.*) Good gracious! What will the man want next!

AARON. For the present, I mean. Later, I hope for a double track all the way.

HENRIETTA. Let's have a double track now. Put the book *so*.

AARON. Ah, Miss White! you have hit upon my greatest difficulty. That bridge can be built only in that spot, which forces us to make a *détour* at great inconvenience and (*sadly*) great expense.

HENRIETTA. Haven't you money enough to carry it on? If twenty-five cents would be any object —

AARON (*disregarding her lightness*). I could have if uncle Harrington would let me draw on him.

HENRIETTA. And will he not? And you and he so devoted to each other!

AARON (*rises*). That is it. He knows he can call on me for any thing.

HENRIETTA. It is a poor rule that won't work both ways.

AARON. This does work both ways, but my share of the work happens to be the hardest. He says he will give me the money when he (*frightened*) — when he — can.

HENRIETTA (*laughing*). When can he?

AARON. When he marries. (*Comes* L.) You've no idea how much I admire you. (*Aside.*) I may as well begin.

HENRIETTA (*rises, goes* R.). Thanks, so much. When he marries? Is he going to be married?

AARON. I — I ought not to have told you. I'd rather not speak of it again. Not that *that's* so much matter; but there is something else, — a contingency. (*A pause.*) Do you think it looks like rain?

HENRIETTTA. I really hadn't thought. This contingency — what is it? You must tell me now.

AARON (*aside*). Why not, and have it over with? (*Comes towards her.*) My uncle wishes to marry your aunt!

HENRIETTA. Oh! is that all? I guessed as much.

AARON. Did you? Then, perhaps you have guessed the rest. But no, I don't believe you would. If you have, perhaps you'd rather I wouldn't say any more about it. If you had, don't mind telling me so. I won't: indeed, I'd as lief not.

HENRIETTA (*aside*). I shall now unravel the plot. (*Aloud.*) What do you mean by the rest? That my aunt won't marry him?

AARON (*mysteriously*). He hasn't asked her.

HENRIETTA. Well. (*A pause.*) Does he want her to ask him?

AARON. No. (*Another pause; boldly.*) He wants me to ask you.

HENRIETTA. You to ask me! For what? My permission? (*Laughing.*) He shall have it. Shall I say the somewhat hackneyed, but always appropriate, "Bless you, my children"? or does he prefer another form of congratulation?

AARON. That is not what I was to ask you.

HENRIETTA. No? (*A pause.*) Whatever it is, you seem in no haste to get it off your mind.

AARON. That is just it. He told me not to be in a hurry. I'd spoil every thing. (*Despairingly.*) But I'll probably spoil every thing anyway!

HENRIETTA. Very likely.

AARON (*slowly*). He wants me to ask you to marry me.

HENRIETTA (*a pause*). Oh! (*Another pause.*) Why?

AARON (*eagerly*). Because he thinks your aunt will not marry him unless you marry somebody first, and so he didn't want to say any thing to her until — I'd said something to you.

HENRIETTA (*aside*). And Mr. Courtenay is not *too* managing! Aunt Evangeline was right, he is not managing enough. (*Aloud.*) You've said something now!

AARON. Then, there is the railroad.

HENRIETTA (*goes to table*). Yes, there is the railroad. It's very ingenious. Did Mr. Courtenay tell you to show that to me too?

AARON. No: that was my idea.

HENRIETTA. And a very pretty idea too. So your uncle wished to bribe you into asking me to marry you?

AARON. Oh, no! not that. I wanted to — marry you — anyway.

HENRIETTA. You appear to. (*Carelessly picks up something from the table.*) How long have you been animated by this absorbing desire?

AARON (*looking at table*). Ever since last spring, when the ground was first laid out.

HENRIETTA (*goes* R., *aside*). It would be a comfort to know whether he is speaking of a cottage home or a lot in a neighboring cemetery. He jumps at conclusions so rapidly that he may lose sight of the intermediate step in either case.

AARON. I am sure I cannot fail, though it seems at first a rash undertaking; and, in the eyes of certain prejudiced people, success is scarcely desirable.

HENRIETTA. It is very good of you to call them prejudiced!

AARON. Oh, well! there was a time when I saw the matter in the same light myself.

HENRIETTA (*growing angry*). Indeed! How long ago, may I ask?

AARON. Before the undeniable advantages of the step were proved to me. It simplifies matters, however, to have *you* consider it favorably at once.

HENRIETTA. "Some prejudiced people" might think so, it is true; but you do not seem much in need of encouragement. Have you decided upon the day which is to bring the *grande finale* of this ingenious plan, and definitely settle this matter in the presence of witnesses? As it is only a matter of time, I may as well, I suppose, be informed.

AARON (*surprised at her tone*). Certainly. Of course, I alone cannot fix it positively; others are to be consulted.

HENRIETTA. Indeed! you are very considerate.

AARON. But sometime during the coming summer would, I think, be agreeable to all parties. We can have a band —

HENRIETTA. A *band?*

AARON. And extensive decorations.

HENRIETTA. In the way of flowers, I suppose.

AARON. Yes, and flags.

HENRIETTA. The American flag?

AARON. Certainly, the American flag.

HENRIETTA. I know that generally plays an important part on would-be-festive occasions, but it seems to me that flowers are more suitable for a church.

AARON. A church! There will hardly be any necessity for a *religious* ceremony, I think.

HENRIETTA. What!

AARON. Why no, I think not.

HENRIETTA. Mr. Fithworth, I have borne with this impertinence long enough. It rather amused, even while it vexed me; but when you propose that we should be married before a — *secretary*, or — or a *speaker* (*half-crying*), or some other *dreadful* person — I will *not* bear it; and I would like to know if you or your uncle think my aunt would *permit* such an arrangement. (*Walks up and down.*)

AARON (*utterly bewildered*). I was not speaking of our being — being married.

HENRIETTA. What *were* you speaking of?

AARON. Of the completion of the Moruckan Railway.

HENRIETTA (*sits, hysterically*). *Why* didn't you say so before?

AARON. I thought you knew.

HENRIETTA. That mistake is rarely made. Please not make it again.

AARON. No, I won't.

HENRIETTA. I will tell you what we can do. You pretend to have fallen in love with me.

AARON (*eagerly*). Yes, I *have* been pretending all along. (*Sits.*)

HENRIETTA (*tartly*). You have pretended pretty badly, then. See if you can't do better.

AARON (*meekly*). Very well.

HENRIETTA. I shall pretend to have fallen in love with you.

AARON. Do you suppose you can?

HENRIETTA. Oh, yes, I *can!* Thus we will cheat aunt Evangeline and uncle Courtenay into an engagement. See? Then you will have the money, and I shall be left free to do as I please. And then we can stop pretending.

AARON (*delightedly*). That is just the thing.

HENRIETTA. Such larks! Here they are now. Come, we must have a little time to rehearse. (*Exeunt* R.)

(*Enter* MRS. R. *and* MR. C. L.)

MR. C. They have been here some time, and have just left the room together. I think the arrangement works to a charm, Mrs. Rodney.

MRS. R. (*sits* R.). Yes: my plan of letting them make each other's acquaintance was, I am sure, the better one. Henrietta is so ridiculously perverse, that the very fact of my presenting a gentleman to her prejudices him in her eyes.

MR. C. (*draws a chair* R.). May I hope that now that your uneasiness as to your niece's future seems in a fair way to be removed, you may turn your attention to the affairs of others, — affairs so immediately connected with yours that they are almost — in fact, that they become — your own affairs.

MRS. R. (*laughing*). My dear Mr. Courtenay, what a dreadfully long sentence, and how dreadfully often you introduce my affairs! Are they in such a bad state? Positively, you frighten me. I know I have no end of plots and counterplots on hand, but I did not know I had fatally involved the interests of others. I begin to feel like a bank

cashier, or a telegraph-office, or some of those complicated things.

MR. C. (*drawing nearer*). My dear Mrs. Rodney, you may have most unconsciously, most innocently, involved the interests of others to an extent that may well be termed fatal.

MRS. R. You are laughing at me, Mr. Courtenay.

MR. C. I am not speaking at random, believe me. I know of one who but waits for a word of encouragement.

MRS. R. (*aside*). He introduces a third person just as a *tête-à-tête* is becoming interesting. He is so afraid my designs include him. (*Aloud.*) But how can I look for this mysterious — I fear, fictitious — personage, while my dear Henrietta is still on my mind and heart? You know, Mr. Courtenay, she is my sole interest at present.

MR. C. (*aside*). I feared I was premature. Marian was right: "She will not have you, and you will have ruined your cause." (*Gallantly.*) Let us hope then, that, in transferring her to the mind and heart of another, you may find a vacancy in your own, which some fortunate man may be permitted to fill. (*Aside.*) That was well shifted to general grounds. (*Aloud.*) If you will permit me, I will seek your niece, and may perhaps be fortunate enough, if not to win her confidence, to form some estimate of her state of mind. (*Exit.*)

MRS. R. (*comes down*). Charming man, but *so* afraid of losing his bachelor liberty! Never mind: if Henrietta and Mr. Fithworth only fancy one another, there will be plenty of time for — But here is Mr. Fithworth alone. Mr. Courtenay has probably taken off Henrietta. He little knows what he does in trusting himself to the companionship of a designing widow.

(*Enter* MR. F., *determined to acquit himself creditably.*)

MRS. R. How do you do, Mr. Fithworth? I am glad to see you again.

MR. F. How do you do, Mrs. Rodney?

MRS. R. So you have finished your stroll in my garden? What do you think of my roses?

AARON. I think, that, beautiful as they are, they are but *next* the rose! (*Aside.*) That was not a happy thought, it was an inspiration!

MRS. R. Next the rose! Why, Mr. Fithworth, you are a poet. Have you found, so soon, the rose *par excellence?*

AARON. I have, Mrs. Rodney. Though perhaps often too much absorbed in the interests which must necessarily form so large a part of my life, I am not blind. Is there — think you? — any chance, any hope, — think you? — (*a little confused*) that your niece will deign to be the day-star — the head-light, as it were — of my otherwise dark existence? (*Fans himself.*)

MRS. R. (*aside*). What a singular young man! Evidently quite in earnest, but what an odd comparison! (*Aloud.*) Ah! Mr. Fithworth, you are by no means the first that has found my niece's charms powerful. I am used to this story, but whether or not she will listen to it is another thing. Have you said any thing to her (*impressively*) — of the subject of subjects, I mean, of course?

AARON (*his manner changes*). Yes; and she seemed quite interested, — indeed she did. She thought of it quite favorably; spoke of its being quite a nice plan. I told her that of course I could not promise that it would be all she hoped: the expense, of course, is the great question.

MRS. R. (*surprised, but listening politely*). (*Aside.*) What a *very* singular young man! To speak of the expense as the "great question" thus early in the affair. And how very remarkable that Henrietta should treat the matter so! Spoke of it favorably! (*Smiling.*) The expense *is* a matter to be considered. It is often heavy.

AARON. Often simply ruinous.

MRS. R. (*still smiling*). But I think you will manage to make both ends meet.

AARON. Both ends meet! I had no idea of doing that, you know.

MRS. R. (*helplessly*). No, I did not know.

AARON. One terminus is at the extreme eastern part of the State, the other at the extreme western.

MRS. R. Terminus!

AARON (*mildly*). You were speaking of the Moruckan Railway, were you not?

MRS. R. (*laughing*). Oh, you man of one idea! How you mystified me! I thought you were speaking of my niece, and your affection for her.

AARON (*crestfallen*). So I was, at first. I — I — am very fond of her.

MRS. R. (*laughing*). Be careful how you tell her of it. She might not be as indulgent of your hobby as you see I am, if you introduce it so inopportunely.

AARON. I have spoken to her of — of — it; and she — well, she listened.

MRS. R. (*warmly*). And that is as much as you could hope for, considering my niece's somewhat peculiar character (*sighing*). She seldom listens to me.

AARON. Then, you advise me to persevere?

MRS. R. By all means. And your uncle — he will approve?

AARON. Oh, yes! If he did not, I would give it — it would be unfortunate.

MRS. R. It would, indeed. But we will gain his consent. I am glad you admire Henrietta. I know you are longing to break forth into more poetic rhapsodies.

AARON. I — am.

(*A silence, in which* MR. F. *feels it his duty to rhapsodize, and* MRS. R. *watches him with an expectant smile.*)

AARON. She is — a very pleasant young lady.

MRS. R. Yes, charming manners. (*Aside.*) When she likes.

AARON. Yes.

MRS. R. (*after a pause*). And pretty.

AARON. Yes. Quite — quite pretty.

MRS. R. (*after another pause, a little impatiently*). And clever.

AARON. Is she? Yes, I noticed it. Very clever.

MRS. R. (*rising*). I see you do not intend to allow yourself to be too enthusiastic in my presence. (*Aside.*) I never saw so impassioned a lover! A "very pleasant young lady," and "quite pretty"! What can Henrietta be thinking of? I am half repenting, but perhaps he is diffident. (*Aloud.*) Where did you leave my niece?

AARON. I left her, about five minutes ago, in the garden with my uncle.

MRS. R. (*impatiently*). Five minutes! Half an hour, at least.

AARON. Was it? (*Recollecting himself.*) It seems longer.

MRS. R. (*half laughing*). Does it? It seemed shorter a moment ago. Suppose we look for them.

AARON. As you please.

MRS. R. (*shaking her head*). It ought to be as *you* please. (*Exeunt.*)

(*Enter by another door* HENRIETTA *and* MR. C.)

MR. C. I am so glad, so very glad, my dear Miss Henrietta, to hear you say so; and I should not speak so earnestly did I not feel your future happiness would be secured.

HENRIETTA. You're so kind, Mr. Courtenay, so kind and disinterested.

MR. C. Not so disinterested as you think.

HENRIETTA (*innocently*). No?

MR. C. Do you think, aside from my interest in you, my dear young lady, that it can be a matter of indifference to my family feeling, who is introduced to me as my future niece?

HENRIETTA. Did you really give any thought to that? I shall now begin to keep watch over you, my dear uncle. You must be very careful whom you introduce to me as my future aunt. I'm *so* particular about such things, you've no idea!

MR. C. So, miss, you already regard me as an uncle? That's right. But I really didn't think Aaron, good boy as he is, would insinuate himself so soon into your interest. How was it, eh?

HENRIETTA (*bashfully*). Oh! he — well, you know, he's so — taking.

MR. C. Taking, is he?

HENRIETTA (*more bashfully*). And so — ardent.

MR. C. (*aside*). He must have braced up wonderfully! (*Aloud.*) Of course he is, of course he is. What else could you expect?

HENRIETTA. And so wrapt up in me, so oblivious of every thing else.

MR. C. (*aside*). He was wrapt up in something else when I saw him. It is the real thing if it has knocked that deuced railroad out of his head. (*Aloud.*) I knew it would be so. (*Facetiously.*) There will be no doing any thing sensible with him now, I suppose.

HENRIETTA (*aside*). No, nor at any other time. (*Aloud.*) He is so different from other people, so — what you clever people, who think in Latin, call *sui generis.*

MR. C. *Sui generis*, that is it. Trust a woman for keen analysis of character.

HENRIETTA (*demurely*). Some people might call it — queer.

MR. C. (*easily*). Some people might, to be sure. Queer? Yes, perhaps, queer — a little.

HENRIETTA (*quickly*). But what is the odds as long as you are happy?

MR. C. (*laughing*). What's the odds, indeed? He is — ahem — he has been (*watching the effect*) rather interested in — *railroads*.

HENRIETTA (*innocently*). Has he? I am so glad. Railroads are so nice. Perhaps he'll give me one of my own. I always wanted to keep a ticket-office.

MR. C. I have no doubt that he will let you. (*Aside.*) It's a special dispensation that he hasn't already offered her the situation! (*Aloud.*) Then, he hasn't yet introduced the subject?

HENRIETTA. No: it needed no introduction. It came of itself.

MR. C. (*puzzled*). Oh!

HENRIETTA (*sweetly*). One subject is as good as another when you are in love, you know.

MR. C. (*smiling*). Is it, indeed? (*Aside.*) I will never try to be *apropos* again. I will talk to Mrs. Rodney about the Maine election or the measles, just as it happens.

HENRIETTA. I think I ought to speak to my aunt about — this matter.

MR. C. Pray, let me bring her to you. I should like an opportunity to say a good word for my nephew.

HENRIETTA. You are very kind, but I'm sure he can't need it. He can make his own way anywhere.

MR. C. Aha, my young lady! already judging others by yourself. Well, well, I imagine there won't be many difficulties in the way. (*Exit, with a bow;* HENRIETTA *courtesies.*)

HENRIETTA (*sinking, laughing, into the nearest chair*). Difficulties! Oh, dear! oh, dear! I never dreamed it would succeed so well. I wonder what that monomaniac has been saying to my aunt. I wonder how he rid the way of difficulties. Put on a cow-catcher probably, and cleared the track!

Oh, dear! *Won't* there be a row when every thing comes out? Let them try again to marry me off to an unwilling victim! I positively must waylay the railroad fiend, my future husband, — oh, dear! I wish I could stop, — and coach him for the *grande finale.* (*Exit, laughing.*)

(*Enter* MRS. R. *and* MR. C.)

MRS. R. So it really seems to be settled? Henrietta is satisfied, and wished to inform me. I wonder that she is not here. Embarrassed, perhaps: I must go to her.

MR. C. Wait one moment, Mrs. Rodney. Now that this matter is, as you say, as good as settled, I must insist upon a hearing. You must let me speak of myself.

MRS. R. As if any subject could be more interesting to me, to any of your friends. (*Sits.*) I may call you my friend?

MR. C. Not if I can help it, madam.

MRS. R. How unkind, Mr. Courtenay! But I am sure you do not mean to hurt me. Pray go on. I am just in the mood for confidences. (*Aside.*) I only hope he'll not tell me of his love for another woman. I'm *so* tired of that sort of confidence.

MR. C. (*with dignity*). You must know, Mrs. Rodney, the sentiments with which you have inspired me. It would be absurd for an old fellow like myself, who has, or who at least is supposed to have, outgrown the season of extravagant sentiment, to clothe the expression of my feeling for you in flowery terms, or to sue for your hand with the spontaneous eloquence of youth. Let me then proceed directly to the point. Mrs. Evangeline Rodney, allow me to say that I am deeply in love with you, and to ask you, to urge you, by the sincere affection which I have to offer you, and by a faint hope that you may have some little interest in my future happiness, to become my wife.

MRS. R. (*much agitated*). Mr. Courtenay, I am at a loss how to receive this — this request, high honor as I must and do esteem it. I am so surprised. How could I imagine you cared for me?

MR. C. (*taking her hand*). The only reason that I have not followed the perfectly straightforward course which was suggested by my feelings from the first day, I might almost say hour, of our acquaintance, was the fear of ruining

matters by hurrying them. You positively refused to think of matrimony until after the settlement of your niece, and so —

MRS. R. (*laughing, and withdrawing her hand*). And so you settled my niece! Ah, Mr. Courtenay, what an arch-plotter you are! I thought I was the most designing creature in existence, but you — you are worse. (*Aside.*) And my wasted designs! I had not half begun!

MR. C. But you have not answered my question. I must insist upon hurrying matters now. My happiness is at stake. Mrs. Rodney — Evangeline — you must at least answer me.

MRS. R. But it is so hard to answer such a question.

MR. C. I hoped it would be easy. It cannot be hard for *you* to confer happiness.

MRS. R. That is very pretty. But are you sure that I am "happiness"?

MR. C. (*taking her hand*). I am willing to take the risk.

MRS. R. Well, then, a wilful man maun have his way — and — and we can have a double wedding! (*He kisses her hand as* HENRIETTA *and* AARON *enter behind them.*)

HENRIETTA. So it is really settled! Allow me to congratulate you, aunt Evangeline. Mr. Courtenay, I am thoroughly satisfied with my new uncle.

MR. C. Ah! Miss Henrietta, you see I shall not give you a new aunt, after all.

HENRIETTA. A new aunt! No, why should you?

MRS. R. You see what you young people are responsible for, setting your elders such bad examples.

HENRIETTA and AARON. Examples! (*All look at each other.*)

MRS. R. You stupid children! Haven't you outgrown the game of "only pretend"?

MR. C. Come, come, Aaron. It isn't safe to keep this up. Miss Henrietta will take you at your word.

HENRIETTA. I always do take him at his word. Isn't he to be trusted?

MRS. R. I should like to shake you both.

MR. C. (*coaxingly*). Now, Miss Henrietta, do be reasonable, even if you must be commonplace.

HENRIETTA. With pleasure, but how? (*To* AARON, *with a frozen smile.*) Do you know any thing of this?

AARON. Of — of what?

MR. C. (*angrily*). He doesn't know any thing, Miss White. I don't wonder you are piqued. He would vex a saint.

HENRIETTA (*politely*). I have no complaint to make of Mr. Fithworth. He has been very polite, and has told me a great deal about railroads.

MR. C. One thing is as good as another when people are in love, eh, Miss Henrietta?

HENRIETTA. So I have heard; and, when one is not in love, railroads are invaluable.

MRS. R. Mr. Fithworth, I warned you that my niece's temperament was peculiar.

AARON. Miss White has been very kind.

MR. C. (*indignantly*). Too kind, I begin to think. Kind enough, I fancied, to promise to marry you.

AARON. If Miss White had made me such a promise, I'm *sure* I should have remembered it.

HENRIETTA (*indignant*). I should not have hesitated to remind you of it if I had.

MRS. R. Henrietta, answer me! Are you not engaged to Mr. Fithworth?

HENRIETTA (*haughtily*). Certainly I am not. This seems to me a very singular cross-examination.

MR. C. (*beginning to look a little amused*). Aaron, are you, or are you not, very much in love with Miss White?

AARON. She is very nice, I'm sure, very nice indeed.

HENRIETTA (*angrily*). Things have come to a pretty pass when a young man cannot spend a day in the same house with one without being asked his intentions — and in her presence! (*A perplexed pause.*)

MRS. R. Henrietta, what have you been about? Is this the result of some audacious plan?

HENRIETTA (*saucily*). I did not know designs were catching, aunt Evangeline: perhaps they are.

MR. C. (*comes down with* MRS. R.). My dear Evangeline, I begin to think these utterly unscrupulous young people have entrapped us; but of course these mischievous plots cannot make any difference with my — let me say *our* — happiness.

MRS. R. Perhaps it would be foolish to allow them to.

MR. C. Supremely foolish.

MRS. R. I may as well tell you. Do you know what I was going to do after Henrietta was established?

MR. C. Attend to certain business —

MRS. R. No, no: I was going to make love to you!

MR. C. Were you? You would have done it better than I.

MRS. R. Yes, just to see if I could, you know. (*Laughing.*) You were so fond of your bachelor liberty. Marian said it would be useless for me to try.

MR. C. Marian Ramsay? Ah! I fear Marian is a double-dealer too. I begin to see through her. Well, reverse the order. Make love to me now, and establish Henrietta afterwards.

HENRIETTA (*coming down*). Mr. Fithworth and I have been talking the matter over; and we have no objection to dancing a quadrille — a *plain* one — at your wedding.

MRS. R. You naughty girl! I shall make your match yet.

HENRIETTA (*laughing*). Oh! I don't mind.

MR. C. And I shall find another wife for you, Aaron, since there seems a mistake about this affair.

AARON (*resignedly*). Very well.

MRS. R. Do you know — Harrington — I believe Marian Ramsay meant us to fall in love with each other all the time.

MR. C. I am very glad she thought of it! They all seem to have been better matchmakers than we are, — even these young people.

MRS. R. (*pauses sadly, then says:*) No, not at all! We, at least, Harrington, have made our own.

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